

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

ILLEGIB

9 SEP 1982

Mr. Vincent Melzac  
Locust Hills Farm  
Rt. 1, Box 188-C  
Romney, West Virginia 26757

Dear Vince:

STAT The second Morris Louis painting has been installed and I am personally delighted with it, although the Veil painting is my favorite of the two. The firm in Rockville which built the plexiglass box did an equally fine job with the second painting. I thought you would be interested in the attached employee bulletin which we published when the two Louises were installed. We tried to convey some of the significance of his work without getting too involved in art history matters which would be of interest to only a relatively small number of our employees. I must say I was rather pleased with the notice, to which [redacted] contributed a great deal.

I am enclosing an updated list of the paintings on loan to us to include specifically the two new Louises. I hope to include the slides and negatives of the two new acquisitions, although I anticipate that reflections from the plexiglass may make those pictures less useful to you than would be the case were they not protected in that fashion. Reduced photographic quality is another of the tradeoffs for the additional security which the plexiglass provides.

I owe you a condition report for the works which were installed in April. The following comments apply:

- a. BLUHM-CITRUS--has horizontal cracks in the paint throughout the entire area. Some especially thick areas of paint are partially detached.
- b. THOMAS-FOR VINCENT--good condition.
- c. NEWMAN-ARROWS--small splashlike stains in lower right and left yellow and white fields. Smudges left, right, and lower edge.
- d. DOWNING VM 519--Distinct bulges in canvas where plastic wrap had been attached. Corners scraped, raw canvas areas as well as upper and lower painted areas are overall soiled.

e. DOWNING VM 45--Holes and bulges in canvas from staples. Redwood framing split on back, tiny paint flecks on lower left purple field and right green field. 2-1/2" arched scrape and smudge on center purple field. Warped corners rubbed and slightly crushed.

f. MEHRING VM 451--good condition.

g. MEHRING VM 299--good condition.

h. LOUIS-GAMMA--small piece of gold leaf or paint missing from lower right corner of frame.

I am enclosing the brochure of the Louis exhibition mounted in Israel and thank you for letting me look at it. I am also returning your notebook of pictures of Marc Mellon and again appreciate the opportunity to keep it for a while and share its contents with colleagues here. Regarding Mellon's work, I can report that the Fine Arts Commission has set aside April 1983 for an exhibit of his work and I am happy to report, also, that I have received a green light for our attempt to borrow the portrait bust of Vice President Bush as a possible additional entry in that exhibit. If a separate letter from me requesting that you seek to borrow the sculpture would be useful, please let me know.

In the book of photographs there are several other portrait busts by Mellon, two of female faces and, of course, your own portrait. There is also a twin bust of two children. If we are successful in obtaining the Bush sculpture, we would like to have the opportunity to consider including in the exhibit one or more of these other excellent portraits. Please let me know what you think of this idea.

I leave Friday evening for my annual pilgrimage to the Romanesque and Gothic edifices of Europe, concentrating this year on Normandy and Brittany. I will be back on the 27th of September. Perhaps we could get together for lunch to discuss the Mellon exhibit and other FAC matters some time during October?

Sincerely yours,



Bruce T. Johnson  
Chairman, Fine Arts Commission

STAT

Enclosures

1. Employee Bulletin
2. Listing of Paintings On Loan
3. Morris Louis slides and negatives
4. Brochure, Israel Museum
5. Photo Notebook

STAT CH/FAC/BTJohnson:jtr  (3 September 1982)

Distribution:

- Orig - Addressee w/atts
- 1 - FAC Files w/o atts



# *EMPLOYEE BULLETIN*

EB No. 961

13 August 1982

## INSTALLATION OF PAINTINGS IN MAIN CONCOURSE, HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

1. Two paintings by Morris Louis, Spreading, 1954, and Gamma, 1960, have been added to the art works on loan to CIA from the Vincent Melzac Collection. They are hanging in the C and D corridors of the first floor of Headquarters Building.

2. Morris Louis, one of the best-known painters of the Washington Color School, was born in 1912 in Baltimore, Maryland, where he attended the Maryland Institute of Art. He lived in New York City in the late 1930's and served on the Federal Art Project. In 1947, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he taught classes in painting at the Washington Workshop Center of the Arts and later worked as an instructor at Howard University. In 1953, he held his first one-man show at the Workshop Center Art Gallery and thereafter, until his death in 1962, had exhibits at a number of galleries in Europe and in New York. Since his death, his works have been displayed at numerous exhibitions around the world, including the Guggenheim Museum and the National Gallery of Art. Many museums have his paintings in their permanent collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Art in Boston, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

3. The Washington Color School emphasized color as both subject matter and expressive content. Morris Louis was influenced by two other American artists, Jackson Pollock and Helen Frankenthaler, and it was the exposure to their work that helped him to become one of the supreme masters of color. He is identified as an abstract expressionist and is considered one of the major American painters of the 1950's.

4. Morris Louis' work breaks down into three groups: Veils and Florals, Unfurleds, and Stripes. Because he painted in complete privacy, there is no eyewitness account of how he worked. Art critics believe that the Veils were made chiefly by pouring thinned magna, or acrylic paint, onto a length of canvas which he had partly stapled to a type of scaffolding. He apparently controlled the flow of pigment across

the surface by tilting the scaffolding and manipulating the canvas. The Veils are considered extremely powerful and original in image and colors.

5. The paintings on loan to the Agency are two of his Veils, both acrylic on canvas. The earlier work, Spreading, is a visionary work reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings. The later painting, Gamma, is markedly different with a unifying darkish pigment that seems to underlie the painting, resulting in bronzed autumnal tones rather than the greyed twilight pastels of the early Veils.

6. To protect these valuable paintings, it was necessary to have them encased in plexiglass. Unfortunately, for technical reasons nonglare glass could not be used. Reflections may interfere somewhat with the viewer's enjoyment of the works, but even behind glass these paintings are important additions to the collection on display in the corridors.

DISTRIBUTION: ALL EMPLOYEES (1-6)

PAINTINGS LOANED TO CIA FROM  
THE VINCENT MELZAC COLLECTION

	<u>Artist's Name</u>	<u>VM No.</u>	<u>Title, Date &amp; Size</u>	<u>Value</u>
(1)	Bluhm, Norman	VM462	Untitled 84 X 72	\$10,000
(2)	Bluhm, Norman	VMA	Citrus - 1959 72 X 108	\$20,000
(3)	Downing, Thomas	VM519	Planks - 1967 96 X 54	\$10,000
(4)	Downing, Thomas	VM45	Fold 11 - 1968 48 X 118 1/2	\$10,000
(5)	Downing, Thomas	VM507	Untitled, 1958-59 91 X 85	\$15,000
(6)	Downing, Thomas	VM510	Rudder (Parallelogram) 101 1/2 X 79 5/8	\$15,000
(7)	Downing, Thomas	VM480	Dapple 74 X 71	\$35,000
(8)	Downing, Thomas	VM479	Center Grid 72 X 72	\$15,000
(9)	Mehring, Howard	VM401	Untitled, circa 1959 101 X 101	\$30,000
(10)	Mehring, Howard	VM404	Untitled, 1959 102 1/4 X 96	\$30,000
(11)	Mehring, Howard	VM405	Untitled, circa 1961 91 3/4 X 81 3/4	\$30,000
(12)	Mehring, Howard	VM451	Untitled, 1958 28 X 28	\$5,000
(13)	Mehring, Howard	VM299	Untitled 36 X 50	\$10,000
(14)	Davis, Gene	VM402	Black Rhythm 88 5/8 X 84 1/8	\$20,000
(15)	Thomas, Alma	VMB	For Vincent 25 X 49	\$10,000
(16)	Thomas, Alma	VM701	Mars Reflection 60 X 60	\$15,000

(17)	Thomas, Alma	VM	<u>Wind Dancing With</u> <u>Spring Flowers</u> 50 X 48	\$10,000
(18)	Newman, Robert	VMC	<u>Arrows</u> 64 X 64	\$5,000
(19)	Louis, Morris	VM	<u>Spreading - 1954</u> 79 1/8 X 97 1/4	\$250,000
(20)	Louis, Morris	VM	<u>Gamma - 1960</u> 81 X 53 1/2	\$250,000

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Sculpture loaned to CIA from  
The Vincent Melzac Collection

(1)	Spaventa, Giorgio		<u>Ecce Homo, 1952</u> 55 X 17 X 15	\$100,000
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28 APR 1982

STAT  
MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Fine Arts Commission  
FROM: [REDACTED] FAC Advisor  
SUBJECT: Melzac Loan

1. Seven paintings were received from Mr. Vincent Melzac on 26 April and six were hung on 26 and 27 April.
2. The condition of the new paintings is as follows:
  - A. BLUHM-CITRUS-has horizontal cracks in the paint throughout the entire area. Some especially thick areas of paint are partially detached.
  - B. THOMAS-FOR VINCENT-good condition.
  - C. NEWMAN-ARROWS-small splashlike stains in lower right and left yellow and white fields. Smudges left, right, and lower edge.
  - D. DOWNING VM 519-Distinct bulges in canvas where plastic wrap had been attached. Corners scraped, raw canvas areas as well as upper and lower painted areas are overall soiled.
  - E. DOWNING VM 45-Holes and bulges in canvas from staples. Redwood framing split on back, tiny paint flecks on lower left purple field and right green field. 2 1/2" arched scrape and smudge on center purple field. Warped corners rubbed and slightly crushed.
  - F. MEHRING VM 451-good condition.
  - G. MEHRING VM 299-good condition.
3. [REDACTED] to design a protective box for the 27" x 28" Mehring. [REDACTED] will not be back from his hospital stay for another two weeks. I am enclosing a sketch of a treatment that the National Gallery uses. Let me know what action if any you would like to have taken.

STAT

*Call VM.*

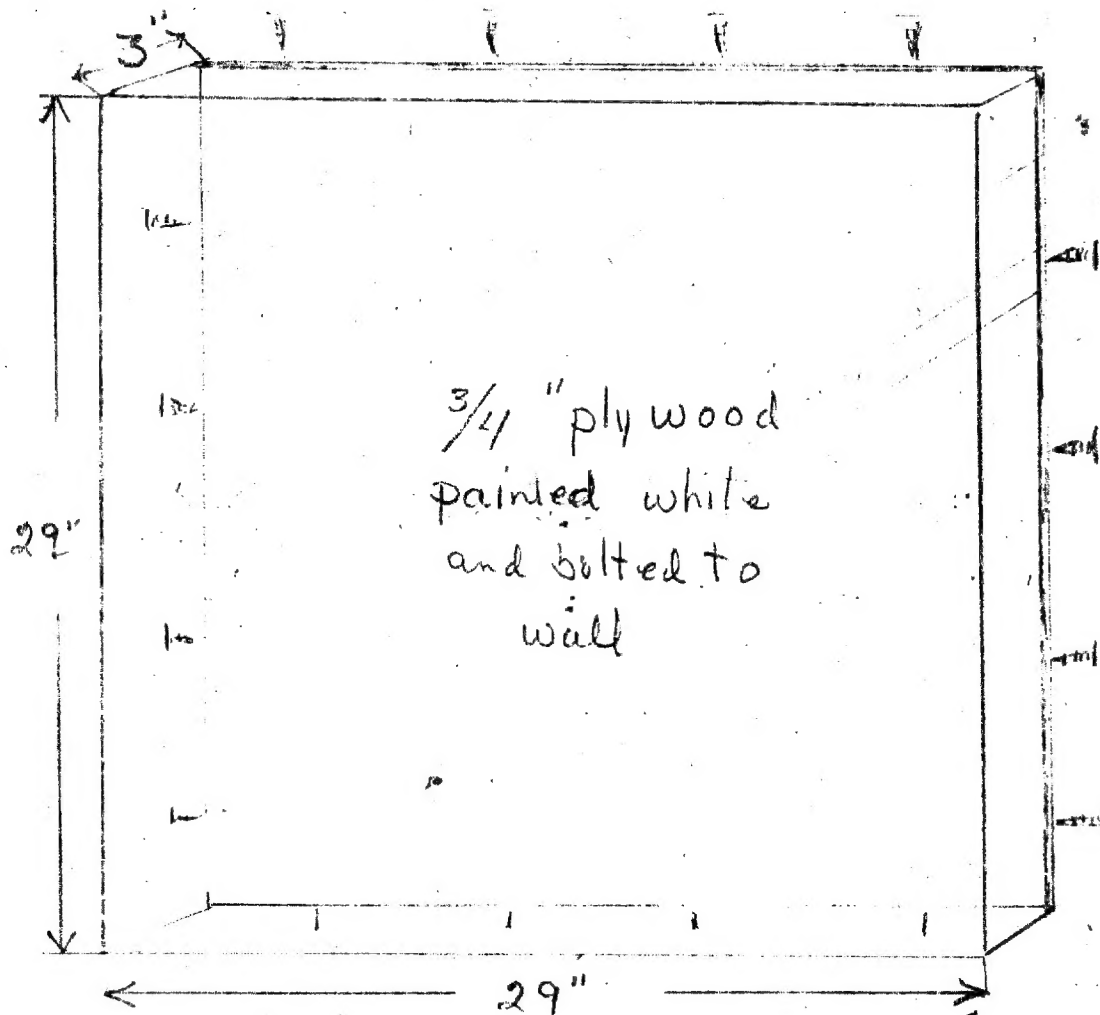
TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE <i>4-28-82</i>
TO: <i>Bruce</i>		
ROOM NO. <i>2000</i>	BUILDING <i>Hqs.</i>	
REMARKS: <i>I have not been able to contact insurance company or have tags made because of the lack of values, dates, and VM # or titles</i>		
FRO		
ROOM NO.	EXTENSION	

FORM NO. 241  
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-8  
WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

STAT



Picture hung on plywood after  
it is attached to wall

3/16" clear plexi box which has been  
predrilled to cover painting and  
screw-fasten into side of board